Many people are impulse buyers. When something catches their attention they buy it. That’s why your shopping checkout line is filled with trinkets and magazines. The design and headlines of your paper will either get someone to stop and look at your paper or not even notice the dust bin that is your newspaper stand. You have spent hours writing, shooting and laying out your paper. If the front page is lacking appeal, no one will stop and pick it up.
Traditional vs. progressive

Compared to the newspapers of yesteryear, today’s front pages have a "less is more" approach. Newspaper front pages used to be filled with headlines and a lead with a jump into the latter part of the paper. The old papers made the reader look over the page and then search for the rest of the story elsewhere in the paper. We now pick two to four stories that lead the news and set the tone for the front page. Many times those stories are inter-connected. The goal of the front page is to grab readers’ attention and have them pick it up. There are two main formats for the front page.

Traditional: This is a no-frills approach that lets the headlines and pictures do the work. Photos, headlines and text are presented in a sober, straightforward style. Usually just the top news of the day.

Newspaper front pages still function as attention grabbers and urge passerby to pick it off the newsstand. For example, the New York Times, despite being a traditional, text-heavy publication, still averages a circulation of more than 1 million. Likewise, the Wall Street Journal averages a circulation of more than 2 million.
Traditional examples
Traditional examples

The New York Times

The Chronicle Herald

Can properly inflated tires really make a difference?
Traditional examples
Progressive: These newspapers emphasize large graphics and photos. Information can be presented in a lavish style with fast-paced visual information designed to entice the reader from the front page into the heart of the paper.

Progressive newspapers offer an information center that combines text, color, photos, information graphics that can emulate and rival some of the better known Web sites. Progressive newspapers add an element of entertainment value that can create an enticing and irresistible front page that readers won’t pass up.
Progressive examples
Progressive examples

The Patriot Ledger.com

BILLION-DOLLAR PLAN FOR QUINCY CENTER

Quincy Center Development Plan

LaFRONTERA

NOTICIAS DEL VALLE

SE ENFRENTAN AL EXAMEN TAKS
Progressive examples

The Clarion-Ledger

STIMULUS SNUB
Miss. 2nd in nation for people in prisons

Roadblock on red light camera ban

JSU's Mason asks faculty, staff to take unpaid days off

The Border Mail

HIGH ALERT

Conditions a recipe for disaster; fire chiefs

The Defense Information School, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland
Center of visual interest (CVI)

As you may already have guessed, some stories are more important than others and some visual imagery, whether it’s a photo or graphic, are simply better than others. Readers expect newspapers to make decisions for them, rather than lump everything together as equal.

A strong photograph can anchor a story or an entire page. Two evenly sized photos run side by side can clash and work against each other, creating two dull lumps. You must begin to evaluate and edit your content by asking yourself questions such as:

1. Do we need multiple photos? Does this story or page require extra graphic information?

2. Which of my photos has stronger content? Does one of my photos capture a key moment of drama?

3. Does one of my photos need to be run bigger, or will it pack the same punch in a smaller space?

4. Does one of my photos have superior quality?

5. Does one of the photos have a preferable shape, i.e., vertical/horizontal?

After choosing which photo is your CVI, run that photo BIG. Use the photo to anchor the page and provide it with impact and interest. You’ll want to begin your page layout with your CVI.

After you’ve chosen your CVI, it’s time to move on and understand some of the basic layout terms you’ll need to become familiar with in layout and design.
Center of visual interest examples

[Images of newspaper front pages with center of visual interest examples]
Common layout terms

To succeed in the layout and design world, you’ll need to speak the language. Not all newsrooms use the same jargon, but there is plenty of agreement on most terms. Some common terms include:

**Teasers**
These promote the most interesting stories inside the paper (also called promos or skyboxes).

**Flag**
The newspaper’s name (also called the nameplate)

**Standing head**
A label headline used for packaging special items such as “chaplain’s corner” or “news briefs.”

**Deck**
A smaller headline added below a main headline. Also known as a subhead or drop head.
Pulled quote
A quotation from the story given graphic emphasis.

Photo credit
A line giving the photographer’s name.

Cutline
Information about a photo or illustration. Also called a caption.

Byline
The writer’s name, often followed by key credentials.

Jump line
A line telling the reader what page this story continues on.

Index
A directory of contents.
Page design

To ensure a successful layout, remember the rules of modular design and keep all story shapes rectangular. In addition, you’ll want to vary the shapes and sizes of stories as well as photos and art. Avoid falling into a rut where everything throughout your publication begins to look alike. Also, remember your CVI and emphasize what’s important. Play up big stories by placing them in a dominant position. Also, balance and scatter your art.
Conclusion

The front page is what will draw your readers to pick up your newspaper. It can help validate all the work that you do as a journalist. If no one is reading your paper your work is in vain. Mastering design skills as well as quality writing is key in this career field. It’s also key for you -- you will get a lot of satisfaction when you see your troops reading your work and gaining valuable information. Be careful out in the field. You will have to go by your base’s guidelines, so don’t step into your office and try to re-design the base publication the first day. No matter how pretty it is, without guidance you will waste your time.
References